

Azad Foundation works across social and religious divides to enable resource poor women to empower themselves by engaging them in remunerative and non-traditional livelihoods. We have been working on multiple levels, to advocate with the state and civil society actors and communities for opening up new markets for the women we train and to engage with men, women and adolescent girls to create an ecosystem of support for enabling women to adopt non-traditional livelihoods.

Advocacy to Open New Avenues for Women in Employment

Advocacy with the Delhi Transport Corporation

Azad has been engaging with DTC to include women as bus drivers since September 2014. The sole female bus driver in Delhi, V. Saritha was inducted in the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) in 2015, under the dynamic leadership and affirmative action of the then Chairperson and Managing Director of DTC, Ms. Debashree Mukherjee. 10 candidates trained by Azad Foundation had participated but got rejected on height requirements.



Meeting with DTC to review height criteria for women's entry in DTC

In 2021, Azad renewed its advocacy fuelled by an advocacy grant from RiseUp. During this phase, Azad conducted an evidence review on women drivers globally, along with primary data on potential of women drivers in Delhi. We had meetings with The Transport Minister, Shri Kailash Gehlot, DTC officials and the Transport Commissioner, Shri Ashish Kundra to enable entry of more women bus drivers in DTC. On February 11th 2022, the Ministry of Transport announced a reduction in the height criteria for women drivers from 159 to 153 cms and a waiver in the Heavy Motor Vehicle License duration and HMV training fee for women to facilitate entry of women as bus drivers.

Marking the success of our advocacy, Azad Foundation in collaboration with Convergence Energy Services Limited (CESL) & the Asian Development Bank (ADB) organized a day long panel on 7th March 2022 'Towards Gender Equality and Sustainability in Public Transport' at India International Centre, New Delhi, with The Minister of Transport, Govt of NCT of Delhi, Shri Kailash Gehlot as the Chief Guest. Shri Gehlot launched the **Advocacy Brief "Claiming Spaces for Women in Transport"** which emerged from a study undertaken by Azad highlighting critical recommendations to address gender based exclusion in transport.



Shri Kailash Gehlot launches the Advocacy Brief "Claiming Spaces for Women in Transport"



Transport Minister Shri Kailash Gehlot and CESL CEO Ms. Mahua Acharya flag off an e-vehicle rally on 7 March

Shri Gehlot along with CESL CEO, Ms Mahua Acharya also flagged off an electric vehicle rally with e-bus, e-scooties and e-cabs driven by women drivers trained by Azad. This was followed by a key note address by Dr Rashmi Singh, The Special Secretary & Director of the Department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare, Govt. of NCT of Delhi followed by a panel discussion.

Women in The e-Mobility Sector: Partnerships for Inclusion

In the year 2020-21, Azad expanded its Women with Wheels training program to two-wheeler training along with four-wheeler training to open up opportunities of employment for women in the e-commerce sector. The 7th March event also marked the ongoing partnership between Azad Foundation & CESL to ensure future readiness of women in the rapidly growing e-mobility sector.

Accessing Resources Through Collaborations

Jubilant Bhartia Foundation (JBF) launched its e-riders initiative to enable 2 Wheeler riders trained by Azad to enter employment on the International Women's Day. Under this initiative, JBF will provide e-scooters to 25 women trained by Azad to facilitate employment of our women riders. After paying off the cost of the vehicle in installments over a period of 2 years, the e-scooter will belong to the rider, enabling her to build an asset for income generation. **This initiative will enable 131 women to earn a cumulative of INR 2.6+ crores by the year 2017.**



"I have been working with Even Cargo since 2 months, after getting my e-scooter from Jubilant. Once, I was delivering a parcel to a woman and she was confused to see me at her door. I confirmed her name and number, but she still couldn't believe that I was a delivery person. Then I called her using the same number I was using to coordinate the delivery and she finally believed me and congratulated me for the work I do."

-Ashi, Delivery Partner with Even Cargo

The first batch of 10 riders, including Ashi who is working as a delivery partner with Even Cargo, received the keys to their e-scooters during the launch of this initiative on 8th March while the second batch of 10 riders received their bikes on 1st June 2022. With the support extended, these riders are working in various e-commerce companies including Big Basket and Even Cargo, generating wealth for themselves and their families.

Advocating for Change in The Community: #GharKaKaamSabkaKaam Campaign

The COVID-19 Pandemic saw a huge increase in the burden of unpaid care and domestic work on women across the world. The burden of unpaid care and domestic work including cooking, cleaning and caring for the elderly and children, imposes costs in terms of missed opportunities for education, skill acquisition and public participation for women. An average Indian woman spends 4 hours 59 minutes each day on domestic chores while men spend only around 1 hour 37 minutes doing the same, according to the NSSO Time Use Survey 2019. This also affects their workforce participation which is merely 18.4% as compared to 57.3% participation of men.

Azad has been engaging with men since the year 2014 with the aim of promoting and building an ecosystem of support, enabling women to enter non-traditional livelihoods. Through our Men for Gender Justice Program, we aim to transform the perspectives of young boys and men on gender, violence, unpaid care work and masculinity.

This International Labor Day, Azad launched a National month-long campaign #GharKaKaamSabkKaam in collaboration with Forum to Engage Men (FEM) Network and Non Traditional Livelihoods Network (NTLN) with the aim to transform the perspective on unpaid care work performed by women by ensuring that it is recognized as "work" and increase the participation of men and boys in unpaid care and domestic work, reducing the burden of women.

With the strategy of recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work, we, along with our partners reached out to communities across Delhi, Jaipur, Kolkata, Chennai, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh, through sensitization workshops, puppet shows, street plays, 'Saajhedaari' Melas (fairs), posters, wall paintings and many more creative activities, recording countless stories of change.



My mother, sister and sister-in law would wake up early in the morning and do all the household work till the end of the day, while the men of my family returned from their jobs and rested. No one ever asked the women if they were tired or needed rest. Seeing this, I knew it had to be changed. I realized that unpaid care work is a form of labor where women don't even get paid. So, I have started participating in household work as my own responsibility which has given women in my family some time for themselves.

—Ravi, MGJ Leader, Jaipur

We released our first-ever podcast series 'Kaam Ki Baat' to initiate conversations on gender roles, paid and unpaid care work with experts working in the field of gender, masculinity, gender-based violence and work.

Azad Alumni Meet: Strengthening the Ecosystem of Support

Azad organises an Alumni meet twice a year across Delhi, Kolkata and Jaipur. The alumni meet aims to foster a sense of solidarity and provide a platform to its alumni from across programs to network, exchange ideas and renew their friendships.

The first alumni meet was organised in November 2021, on the National Constitution Day across locations around the themes 'Equality' and 'Right to Choice'. The second alumni meet was organised in the month of March focusing on the theme "Women in the Workforce". The events brought together more than a 1,000 Azad alumni including our trainees, drivers, feminist and youth leaders, for perspective building on themes including diversity, inclusion, gender-based violence, sexuality, unpaid care work and non-traditional livelihoods, along with fun games and activities.